

## THE BLACK ROBE.

By Willie Collins.

—AUTHOR OF—

"THE WOMAN IN WHITE," "THE MOON-STONE," "AFTER DARK," "NO NAME," "MAN AND WIFE," "THE LAW AND THE LADY," "THE NEW MAGDALEN," ETC., ETC.

We were punctual to the appointed hour—eight o'clock.

The second who acted with me was a French gentleman, a relative of one of the officers who had brought the challenge. At his suggestion, we had chosen the pistol as our weapon. Romyne, like most Englishmen at the present time, knew nothing of the use of the sword. He was almost equally inexperienced with the pistol.

Our opponents were late. They kept us waiting for more than ten minutes. It was not pleasant waiting to wait in. The day had dawned damp and drizzling. A thick white fog was slowly rolling in on us from the sea.

When they did appear the General was not among them. A tall, well-dressed young man saluted Romyne with stern courtesy, and said to a stranger who accompanied him: "Explain the circumstances."

The stranger proved to be a surgeon. He entered at once on the necessary explanation. The General was too ill to appear. He had been attacked that morning by a fit—the consequences of the blow that he had received. Under these circumstances his eldest son (Maurice) was now on the ground to fight the duel, on his father's behalf, attended by the General's seconds, and with the General's full approval.

We instantly refused to allow the duel to take place, Romyne loudly declaring that he had no quarrel with the General's son. Upon this, Maurice broke away from his seconds, drew out one of his gloves, and, stepping close up to Romyne, struck him on the face with the glove. "Have you no quarrel with me now?" the young Frenchman asked. "Must I spit on you as my father did?" His seconds dragged him away, and we were left to our own devices.

At the mischief was done, Maurice's fiery temper flashed in his eyes. "Load the pistols," he said. "The insult publicly offered to him, and the outrage publicly threatened, there was no other course to take. It had been left to us to produce the pistols. We therefore requested the seconds of our opponent to examine and to load them. While this was being done, the advancing sea-fog so completely enveloped us that the duelists were unable to see each other. We were obliged to wait for the chance of a partial clearing in the atmosphere. Romyne's temper had become calm again. The generosity of his nature spoke in the words which he now addressed to his seconds.

"After all," he said, "the young man is a good son—he is bent on redressing what he believes to be his father's wrong. Does his flipping his glove in my face matter to me? I think I shall fire in the air."

"I shall refuse to act as your second if you do," answered the French gentleman who was assisting us. "The General's son is famous for his skill with the pistol. If you didn't see it in his face just now, I did—he means to kill you. Defend your life, sir!" I spoke quite as strongly to the same purpose when my turn came. Romyne yielded—he placed himself unobtrusively in our hands.

In a quarter of an hour the fog lifted a little. We measured the distance, having previously arranged (at my suggestion) that the two men should both fire at the same moment, at a given signal. Romyne's composure, as they faced each other, was, in a man of his frigid nervous temperament, really wonderful. I placed him sideways, in a position which in some degree lessened his danger, by lessening the surface exposed to the bullet. My French colleague put the pistol into his hand, and gave him the last word of advice: "Let your arm hang loosely down, with the barrel of the pistol pointing straight to the ground. When you hear the signal only lift your arm as far as the elbow; keep the elbow pressed against your side—and fire." We could do no more for him. As we drew aside—I own it—my tongue was like a cinder in my mouth, and a horrid inner cold crept through me to the marrow of my bones.

The signal was given, and the two shots were fired at the same time. My first look was at Romyne. He took off his hat and banded it to me with a smile. His adversary's bullet had cut a piece out of the brim of his hat, on the right side. He had literally escaped by a hair-breadth.

While I was congratulating him, the fog gathered again more thickly than ever. Looking anxiously toward the ground occupied by our adversaries, we could only see vague, shadowy forms

hurriedly crossing and recrossing each other in the mist. Something had happened. My French colleague took my arm and pressed it significantly. "Leave me to inquire," he said. Romyne tried to follow; I held him back; we neither of us exchanged a word.

The fog thickened and thickened, until nothing was to be seen. Once we heard the surgeon's voice called impatiently for a light to help him. No light appeared as we could see. Dreading as the fog itself, the silence gathered around us again. On a sudden it was broken by another voice, strange to both of us, shrieking hysterically through the impenetrable mist. "Where is he?" the voice cried, in the French language. "Assassin! assassin! where are you?" Was it a woman, or was it a boy? We heard nothing more. The effect on Romyne was terrible to see. He who had calmly confronted the weapon lifted to kill him, shuddered dumbly like a terror-stricken animal. I put my arm round him and hurried him away from the place.

We waited at the hotel until our French friend joined us. After a brief interval he appeared, announcing that the surgeon would follow him.

The duel had ended fatally. The chance course of the bullet, urged by Romyne's unpracticed hand, had struck the General's son just above the right nostril, had penetrated to the back of his neck, and had communicated a fatal shock to the spinal marrow. He was a dead man before they could take him back to his father's house.

So far our fears were confirmed. But there was something else to tell, for which our worst presentiments had not prepared us.

A younger brother of the fallen man (a boy of thirteen years old) had secretly followed the dueling party on their way from his father's house, had hidden himself, and had seen the dreadful end. The seconds only knew of it when he burst out of his place of concealment, and fell on his knees by his dying brother's side. His were the fearful cries which we had heard from invisible lips. The slayer of his brother was the "assassin" whom he had vainly tried to discover through the fathomless obscurity of the mist.

We both looked at Romyne. He was looking at us with a look that said, "I tried to reason with him."

"Your life was at your opponent's mercy," I said. "It was he who was skilled in the use of the pistol; your risk was infinitely greater than his. Are you responsible for an accident? Rouse yourself, Romyne! Think of the time to come, when all this will be forgotten."

"Never," he said, "to the end of my life." He made that reply in dull, monotonous tones. His eyes looked wearily and vacantly straight before him. The extraordinary change in him had startled me. He showed no signs of a coming loss of consciousness; and yet, all that was most brightly animated in his physical life seemed to have mysteriously faded away. I spoke to him again. He remained impenetrably silent; he appeared not to hear, or not to understand me. The surgeon came in, while I was still at a loss what to say or do next. Without waiting to be asked for his opinion, he observed Romyne attentively, and then drew me away into the next room.

"Your friend is suffering from a severe nervous shock," he said. "Can you tell me anything of his habits of life?"

I mentioned the prolonged night studies and the excessive use of tea. The surgeon shook his head. "If you want my advice," he proceeded, "take him home at once. Don't subject him to further excitement, when the result of the duel is known in the town. If it ends in our appearing in a court of law, it will be a more formality in this case, and you can surrender when the time comes. Leave me your address in London."

I felt that the wisest thing I could do was to follow his advice. The boat crossed to Folkestone at an early hour that day—we had no time to lose. Romyne offered no objection to our return to England; he seemed perfectly careless what became of him. "Leave me quiet," he said, "and do as you like." I wrote a few lines to Lady Berriock's medical attendant, informing him of the circumstances. A quarter of an hour afterward we were on board the steamboat.

There were very few passengers. After we had left the harbor my attention was attracted by a young English lady—traveling, apparently, with her mother. As we passed her on the deck she looked at Romyne, with compassionate interest so vividly expressed in her beautiful face that I imagined they might be acquainted. With some difficulty I prevailed sufficiently over the torpor that possessed him to induce him to look at our fellow passenger.

"Do you know that charming person?" I asked.

"No," he replied, with the weariest indifference. "I never saw her before. I'm tired—tired—tired! Don't speak to me; leave me by myself."

"Excuse me for disturbing you," she said; "I think your friend wants you."

She spoke with the modesty and self-possession of a slightly-bred woman. A little heightening of her color made her, to my eyes, more beautiful than ever. I thanked her, and hastened back to Romyne.

He was standing by the barred skylight which guarded the machinery. I instantly noticed a change in him. His eyes wandered here and there, in search of his hand, more than recovered their animation—there was a wild look of terror in them. He seized me roughly by the arm and pointed down to the engine room.

"What do you hear there?" he asked.

"I hear the thump of the engine."

"Nothing else?"

"Nothing. What do you hear?"

He suddenly turned away.

"I'll tell you," he said, "when we get on shore."

As we approached the harbor at Folkestone Romyne's agitation appeared to subside. His head drooped a little, his eyes half-closed—he looked like a weary man quietly falling asleep.

On leaving the steamboat, I ventured to ask our charming fellow passenger if I could be of any service in reserving places in the London train for her mother and herself. She thanked me, and said they were going to visit some friends at Folkestone. In making this reply she looked at Romyne. "I am afraid he is very ill," she said, in lowered tones. Before I could answer, her mother turned to her with an expression of surprise, and directed her attention to the friends whom she had mentioned, waiting to greet her. Her last looks as they took her away rested tenderly and sorrowfully upon Romyne. He never returned it; he was not even aware of it. As I led him to the train he leaned more and more heavily on my arm. Seated in the carriage, he sank at once into a profound sleep.

We drove to the hotel at which my friend was accustomed to reside when he was in London. His long sleep on the journey seemed, in some degree, to have relieved him. We dined together in his private room. When the servants had withdrawn, I found the unhappy result of the duel was still preying upon his mind.

"The horror of having killed that man," he said, "is more than I can bear alone. For God's sake, don't leave me. I have received letters at Boulogne which informed me that my wife and family had accepted an invitation to stay with some friends at the seaside. Under these circumstances I was on my way to his service. Having quieted his anxiety on this point, I reminded him of what had passed between us on board the steamboat. He tried to change the subject. My curiosity was too strongly aroused to permit this; I persisted in helping his memory.

"We were looking into the engine-room," I said, "and you asked me what I heard there. You promised to tell me what you heard, as soon as we got on shore."

He stopped me before I could say more.

"I begin to think it was a delusion," he answered. "You ought not to interpret too literally what a person in my dreadful situation may say. The stain of another man's blood is on me."

I interrupted him in my turn. "I refuse to hear you speak of yourself in that way," I said. "You are no more responsible for the Frenchman's death than if you had been driving and had accidentally run over him in the street. I am not the right companion for a man who talks as you do. The proper person to be with you is a doctor." I really felt irritated with him, and I saw no reason for concealing it.

Make some little concession on your side. I want to see how I get through the night. We will return to what I said to you on board the steamboat tomorrow morning. Is it agreed?"

It was agreed, of course. There was a door of communication between our bedrooms. At his suggestion it was left open.

"If I find I can't sleep," he explained, "I want to feel assured that you can hear me if I call to you."

Three times in the night I awoke, and, seeing the light burning in his room, looked in at him. He always carried some of his books with him when he traveled. On each occasion when I entered the room he was reading quietly. "I suppose I shall call my nights' sleep on the railway," he said. "It doesn't matter; I am content. Something that I was afraid of has not happened. I am used to wakeful nights. Go back to bed, and don't be uneasy about me."

The next morning the deferred explanation was put off again.

"Do you mind waiting a little longer?" he asked.

"Not if you particularly wish it."

"Will you do me another favor? You know that I don't like London. The noise in the streets is distracting. Besides, I may tell you I have a sort of distrust of noise since—"

He stopped with an appearance of confusion.

"Since I found you looking into the engine-room?" I asked.

"Yes. I don't feel inclined to trust the chances of another night in London. I want to try the effect of perfect quiet. Do you mind going back with me to Vange? Dull as the place is, you can amuse yourself. There is good shooting, as you know."

In an hour more we had left London.

Vange Abbey is, as I suppose, the most solitary country house in England. If Romyne wanted quiet it was exactly the place for him.

On the rising ground of one of the widest moors in the North Riding of Yorkshire, the ruins of the old monastery are visible from all points of compass. There are traditions of thriving villages clustering about the Abbey, in the days of the monks, and of hostilities devoted to the reception of pilgrims from every part of the Christian world. Not a vestige of these buildings is left. They were deserted by the pious inhabitants, it is said, at the time when Henry the Eighth suppressed the monasteries, and gave the Abbey and the broad lands of Vange to his faithful friend and courtier, Sir Miles Romyne. In the next generation, the son and heir of Sir Miles built the dwelling-house, helping himself liberally from the solid stone walls of the monastery. With some unimportant alterations and repairs the house stands, defying time and weather, to the present day.

At the last station on the railway the horses were waiting for us. It was a lovely moonlight night, and we shortened the distance considerably by taking the bridge-path over the moor. Between nine and ten o'clock we reached the Abbey.

Years had passed since I had last been Romyne's guest. Nothing out of the house or in the house seemed to have undergone any change in the interval. Neither the good North-country butler, nor his buxom Scotch wife, skilled in cookery, looked any older; they received me as if I had left them a day or two since, and had come back again to live in Yorkshire. My well-remembered bedroom was waiting for me, and the matchless old Madeira welcomed us when my host and I met in the inner-hall, which was the ordinary dining-room of the Abbey.

As we faced each other at the well-spread table, I began to hope that the familiar influences of his country home were beginning already to breathe their blessed quiet over the disturbed mind of Romyne. In the presence of his faithful old servants he seemed to be capable of controlling the morbid remorse that oppressed him. He spoke to them composedly and kindly; he was affectionately glad to see his old friend once more in the old house.

When we were near the end of our meal something happened that startled me. I had just banded the wine to Romyne, and he had filled his glass, when he suddenly turned pale and lifted his head like a man whose attention is unexpectedly roused. No person but ourselves was in the room; I was not speaking to him at the time. He looked round suspiciously at the door behind him leading into the library, and rang the old-fashioned bell which stood by him on the table. The servant was directed to close the door.

"Are you cold?" I asked.

"No," he reconsidered that brief answer, and contradicted himself. "Yes—the library fire has burnt low, I suppose."

In my position at the table I had seen the fire; the grate was heaped with blazing coals and wood. I said nothing. The pale change in his face and the contradictory reply roused doubts in me which I had hoped never to feel again.

He pushed away his glass of wine, and still kept his eyes fixed on the closed door. His attitude and expression were plainly suggestive of the act of listening. Listening to what?

After an interval, he abruptly addressed me.

"Do you call it a quiet night?" he said.

"As quiet as quiet can be," I replied. "The wind has dropped, and even the fire doesn't crackle. Perfect stillness—indoors and out."

"Out?" he repeated. For a moment he looked at me intently, as if I had started some new idea in his mind. I asked as lightly as I could if I had said anything to surprise him. Instead of answering me he started out of his chair with a cry of terror and left the room.

I scarcely knew what to do. It was impossible, unless he returned immediately, to let this extraordinary proceeding pass without notice. After waiting for a few minutes, I rang the bell.

The old butler came in. "He looked in blank amazement at the empty chair."

"Where's the master?" he asked.

I could only answer that he left the table suddenly, without a word of explanation. "He may perhaps be ill," I added. "As his old servant, you can do no harm if you go and look for him. Say that I am waiting here, if he wants me."

The minutes passed slowly and more slowly. I was left alone for so long a time that I began to feel seriously uneasy. My hand was on the bell again, when there was a knock at the door. I had expected to see the butler. It was the groom who entered the room.

"Garthwaite can't come down to you, sir," said the man. "He says if you will please go up to the master on the Belvidere."

The house, extending round three sides of a square, was only two stories high. The flat roof, accessible through a species of hatchway, and still surrounded by its sturdy stone parapet, was called "The Belvidere," in reference as usual to the fine view which it commanded. Leading from what I mounted the ladder which led to the roof. Romyne received me with a harsh outburst of laughter—that saddest laughter which is true trouble in disguise.

"Here's something to amuse you," he cried. "I believe old Garthwaite thinks I am drunk—he won't leave me up here by myself."

Letting this strange assertion remain unanswered, the butler withdrew. As he passed me on his way to the ladder, he whispered: "Be careful of the master! I tell you, sir, he has a bee in his bonnet this night." Although not of the North country myself, I knew the meaning of the phrase. Garthwaite suspected that the master was nothing less than mad.

Romyne took my arm when we were alone—we walked slowly from end to end of the Belvidere. The moon was, by this time, low in the heavens; but her mild mysterious light still streamed over the roof of the house and the high healthy ground round it. I looked at Romyne. He was deadly pale; his hand shook as it rested on my arm—and that was all. Neither in look nor manner did he betray the faintest sign of mental derangement. He had perhaps needlessly alarmed the faithful old servant by something that he had said or done. I determined to clear up that doubt immediately.

"You left the table very suddenly," I said. "Did you feel ill?"

"Not ill," he replied. "I was frightened. Look at me—I'm frightened still."

"What do you mean?"

Instead of answering he repeated the strange question which he had put to me downstairs.

"Do you call it a quiet night?"

Considering the time of year and the exposed situation of the house, the night was almost preternaturally quiet. Throughout the vast open country all around us not even a breath of air could be heard. The night birds were away, or were silent at the time. But one sound was audible when we stood still and listened—the cool, quiet bubble of a little stream, led to view in the valley-ground to the south.

"I have told you already," I said. "So still a night I never remember on this Yorkshire moor."

He laid one hand heavily on my shoulder.

"What did the poor boy say of me, whose brother I killed?" he asked.

"What words did we hear through the dripping darkness of the mist?"

"I won't encourage you to think of them. I refuse to repeat the words."

He pointed over the northward parapet.

"It doesn't matter whether you accept or refuse," he said. "I hear the boy at this moment—there!"

He repeated the horrid words, marking the pauses in the utterance of them with his finger, as if they were sounds that he heard.

"Assassin! assassin! where are you?" "Good God!" I cried, "you don't mean that you really hear the voice?"

"Do you hear what I say? I hear the boy as plainly as you hear me. The voice screams at me through the clear moonlight as it screams at me through the sea-fog. Again and again. It's all round the house. That way now, where the light just touches on the tops of the heather. Tell the servants to have the horses ready the first thing in the morning. We leave Vange Abbey to-morrow."

These were wild words. If he had spoken them wildly, I might have shared the butler's conclusion that his mind was deranged. There was no undue vehemence in his voice or his manner. He spoke with a melancholy resignation—he seemed like a prisoner submitting to a sentence that he had deserved. Remembering the cases of men suffering from nervous disease who had been haunted by apparitions, I asked if he saw any imaginary figure under the form of a boy.

"I see nothing," he said; "I only hear. Look yourself. It is in the last degree improbable; but let us make sure that nobody has followed me from Boulogne, and is playing me a trick."

We made the circuit of the Belvidere. On its eastward side the house wall was built against one of the towers of the old Abbey. On the westward side the ground sloped steeply down to a deep pool or tarn. Northward and southward there was nothing to be seen but the open moor. Look where I might, with the moonlight to make the view plain to me, the solitude was as void of any living creature as if we had been surrounded by the awful dead world of the moon.

"Was it the boy's voice that you heard on the voyage across the channel?" I asked.

"Yes; I heard it for the first time—down in the engine-room; rising and falling, rising and falling, like the sound of the engines themselves."

"And when did you hear it again?"

"I feared to hear it in London. It left me. I should have told you when we stepped ashore out of the steamboat. I was afraid that the noise of the traffic in the streets might bring it back to me. As you know, I passed a quiet night. I had the hope that my imagination had deceived me—that I was the victim of a delusion, as people say. In the perfect tranquillity of this place the voice has come back to me. While we were at table I heard it again—behind me, in the library. I heard it still when the door was shut. I ran up here to try if it would follow me into the open air. It has followed me. We may as well go down again into the hall. I know now there is no escaping from it. My dear old home has become horrible to me. Do you mind returning to London to-morrow?"

What I felt and feared in this miserable state of things matters little. The one chance that I could see for Romyne was to obtain the best medical advice. I sincerely encouraged his idea of going back to London the next day.

We had sat together by the hall fire for about ten minutes, when he took out his handkerchief and wiped away the perspiration from his forehead, drawing a deep breath of relief. "It has gone!" he said, faintly.

"When did you hear the boy's voice?" I asked—"do you hear it continually?"

"No, at intervals; sometimes longer, sometimes shorter."

"And, thus far, it comes to you suddenly, and leaves you suddenly?"

"Yes."

"Do my questions annoy you?"

"I make no complaint," he said, sadly. "You can see for yourself—I patiently suffer the punishment that I have deserved."

I contradicted him at once. "It is nothing of the sort! It's a nervous malady which medical science can control and cure. Wait till we get to London."

This expression of opinion produced no effect on him.

"I have taken the life of a fellow-creature," he said. "I have closed the career of a young man who, but for me, might have lived long and happily and honorably. Say what you may, I am of the race of Cain. He had the mark set on his brow. I have my ordeal. Delude yourself, if you like, with false hopes. I can endure—and hope for nothing. Good night."

Early the next morning the good old butler came to me, in great perturbation, for a word of advice.

"Do come, sir, and look at the master! I can't find it in my heart to wake him!"

It was time to wake him, if we were to go to London that day. I went into the bedroom. Although I was no doctor, the restorative importance of that profound and quiet sleep impressed itself on me so strongly that I took the responsibility of leaving him undisturbed. The event proved that I had acted wisely. He slept until noon.

There was no return of the "torment of the voice," as he called it, poor fellow. We passed a quiet day, excepting one little interruption, which I am warned not to pass over without a word of record in this narrative.

We had returned from a ride. Ro-

mayne had gone into the library to read; and I was just leaving the stables, after a look at some recent improvements, when a pony-chaise with a gentleman in it drove up to the door. He asked politely if he might be allowed to see the house. There were some fine pictures at Vange, as well as many interesting relics of antiquity; and the rooms were shown, in Romyne's absence, to the very few strangers who were adventurous enough to cross the heathy desert that surrounded the Abbey. On this occasion the stranger was informed that Mr. Romyne was at home. He at once apologized—with an appearance of disappointment, however, which induced me to step forward and speak to him.

"Mr. Romyne is not very well," I said, "and I cannot venture to ask you into the house. But you will be welcome, I am sure, to walk round the grounds, and to look at the ruins of the Abbey."

He thanked me and accepted the invitation. I find no great difficulty in describing him, generally. He was elderly, fat and cheerful; buttoned up in a long black frock-coat, and presenting that closely shaven face and that invariable expression of watchful humility about the eyes, which we all associate with the reverend personality of a priest.

To my surprise, he seemed, in some degree at least, to know his way about the place. He made straight for the dreary little lake which I have already mentioned, and stood looking at it with an interest which was so incomprehensible to me, that I own I watched him.

He ascended the slope of the moorland and entered the gate which led to the grounds. All that the gardeners had done to make the place attractive, failed to claim his attention. He walked past lawns, shrubs, and flower-beds, and only stopped at an old stone fountain which tradition declared to have been one of the ornaments of the garden in the time of the monks. Having carefully examined this relic of antiquity, he took a sheet of paper from his pocket, and consulted it attentively. It might have been a plan of the house and grounds, or it might not—I can only report that he took the path which led him by the shortest way to the ruined Abbey church.

As he entered the roofless inclosure he reverently removed his hat. It was impossible for me to follow him any further without risk of discovery. I sat down on one of the fallen stones waiting to see him again. It must have been at least half an hour before he appeared. He thanked me for my kindness as composedly as if he had quite expected to find me in the place that I occupied.

"I have been deeply interested in all that I have seen," he said. "May I venture to ask, what is perhaps an indiscreet question on the part of a stranger?"

I ventured on my side to ask what this question might be.

"Mr. Romyne is indeed fortunate," he resumed, "in the possession of this beautiful place. He is a young man, I think?"

"Yes."

"Is he married?"

"No."

"Excuse my curiosity. The owner of Vange Abbey is an interesting person to all good antiquaries like myself. Many thanks again. Good day."

His pony-chaise took him away. His last look rested—not on me—but on the old Abbey.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

COURAGE.

Skoheleff's personal bravery was not only of the most reckless character, but at times it seemed to partake of the mere bravado, in which only extraordinary luck prevented him from reaping in death the well-earned reward of his foolishness. He always wore a white coat, a white hat, and rode a white horse in battle, simply because other generals avoided these target marks. He was perpetually riding at breakneck speed over some fence or ditch. He never lost an opportunity of displaying courage. He went into battle in his cleanest uniform and fresh undervest, covered with perfume, and wearing a diamond-budded sword, as he said, that he might die with his clean clothes on. For a long time he wore, with evident affection, a coat in which he had been wounded, and which had a conspicuous patch on the shoulder.

Yet all this was not mere bravado and nonsense, but was the result of thought, and almost cold-blooded calculation. It was intended to impress his men, and it did so. They firmly believed he could not be hit, and whenever they saw a white horse, coat and cap among them, they knew that it was Skoheleff, and so long as he was there they felt sure that everything was going well. At the beginning of the war he made up his mind firmly that he would never come out of it alive. (After reading me the telegram announcing the armistice, one of the first things he said was: "Well, perhaps I won't get killed after all.") With this idea firmly fixed in his mind, that his death was only a question of a few weeks or months, his one thought was how to best use his life so as to make an impression on his men, and gain such a control over them that they would follow him anywhere. In everything that he did he tried to eliminate the idea of danger from their minds, and to make the most dangerous exploit appear as an ordinary every-day thing. —*Russian Army Life.*



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SIX YEARS.

Having had many years' experience  
at Piano-forte making we feel confident  
that we can offer work second to no  
other manufacturers in this or any  
other State in the country.

**Organs Constantly on Hand**

or Built to Order,

containing any number of combination  
of stops. Buyers of organs will readily  
perceive the great advantage in having  
their organs constructed under their  
own supervision, and purchasing at  
first hand, thereby saving agents'  
commissions.

We are also manufacturers for

**RETAIL ONLY**

**Superior Walnut**

And other

**EXTENSION TABLES**

OF SPLENDID FINISH

Which we are offering at JOBBER'S

PRICES.

Tables of any length desired, and  
designed to stand the solid wear of  
every day use.

Please send for circular and price list.

**GRANITE HOUSE.**

J. W. CALEFF & CO., Proprietors

Corner Granite and Elm Streets,  
MANCHESTER, N. H.  
RATE \$100 PER DAY  
Carriages to and from every train.  
27-31-44-37.

**Meredith Eagle.**

**C. H. KIMBALL,**

Editor and Proprietor.

**S. H. Robie, Manager.**

Terms of Subscription:

\$1.50 a Year-\$1.25 when paid in advance.

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Bookbinding and Bill Posting done on ap-  
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**SAURDAY, JAN. 1, 1881.**

**NEWS FROM OUR NEIGHBORS.**

**ASHLAND.**

The iron bridge arrived Saturday of  
last week. It was built by the Corrugated  
Metal Co., of Berlin, Conn., and has  
been put into position.

C. F. Bracy has moved his photo-  
graphical studio near the iron bridge on  
Main street and will soon be ready for  
business.

John S. Drew has hung out a new  
sign, red, white and blue saying,  
"Bakery and Lunch Room, New and  
Stewed Oysters."

A large lot of wool is being hauled  
into this village. Prices are \$3.00 and  
\$3.50 per cord.

D. C. Merrill has opened a place at  
the old Thompson shoe shop where he  
is prepared to attend to all repairing.  
Boots and shoes made to order.

Will Perkins has returned to Bates  
college this week.

Dr. O. B. Cheney, of Bates college  
and Mr. H. F. Woodman, of Salem,  
Mass., have been here this week.

There was a fine lecture by Rev. J. E.  
Fullerton Tuesday evening, a ten-  
minute lecture by Mrs. A. P. Brown  
Thursday evening, a promenade con-  
cert and dance Friday night, and there  
will be a public installation of officers  
by the G. A. R. Post at the Town Hall  
Saturday evening.

**WARREN.**

Our people are securing their usual  
supply of ice.

The Congressional election was not  
very largely attended in this town.

The usual Christmas gathering was  
held at the Town Hall on Saturday  
evening, which was well attended and  
enjoyed especially by the little folks.  
Rev. C. W. Dockrill presided. There  
was a short entertainment, consisting  
of recitations and songs, and after  
the occasion, after which hot oysters  
and ice cream were in order, followed  
by the distribution of presents from  
the two well laden Christmas trees.

The presents were numerous and  
varied; some for fancy but more for  
comfort, such as scarfs, mittens, muffs  
etc., articles much needed this cold  
weather. The pastor and family were  
remembered by their friends, by re-  
ceiving a nice rug, shawl and other  
articles. We think none were more  
surprised and pleased too, than Mr.  
and Mrs. Stephen R. Clark were when  
their names were called, and a large  
family bible presented to them. Sun-  
day morning and evening, Mr. C. not  
only carries his own family to church,  
but takes his big sleigh, and by the time  
he arrives at the church, the sleigh is  
brim full. So for this act of kindness,  
which he seems to enjoy as well as the  
rest, he receives the bible as a token  
of remembrance.

At Christmas I am reminded of the  
remark of a child. Many years since  
a little girl said to her mother, "Mother  
why do we wish our friends a Merry  
Christmas and a Happy New Year?"  
"I think it is to be the other way,"  
said the mother, "a Merry Christmas and  
a Happy New Year." Reader, did you ever think of  
it this way?  
X. Y. Z.

The residence of Wm. Vannah was  
burned, being totally destroyed, about  
midnight, Wednesday, with furniture  
and winter's provisions. Mr. Vannah is  
a helpless invalid and his wife hardly  
succeeded in rescuing him from the  
flames. Loss about \$600. D.

**LAONIA.**

Charles Prescott, the milk man met  
with an accident on Tuesday morning  
by his horse getting frightened at a  
dog. The team was nearly demolished,  
injuring the horse severely.

Hon. J. C. Moulton had a social  
gathering at his residence on Friday  
evening of last week, of friends and  
employees of the Gilford hosiery mill,  
the occasion being his 70th birthday.

Quite a large number of members of  
Star of Hope division No. 47 S. of T.,  
called upon Mrs. Patterson, a poor  
lady and a member of that body and  
had a good time, expressing their sym-  
pathy for Mrs. P. in a good substantial  
manner by leaving behind them each a  
pound of something good.

The employees of the Laconia Car  
Co., presented Mr. N. P. Burnham,  
overseer of the machine and black-  
smith shops a beautiful brass rocking  
chair on Friday noon, Dec. 24th.

On Thursday evening, Dec. 23d,  
Chemical Engine Co., gave their annual  
ball, which was a success.

We had the pleasure of being present  
at a Christmas gathering at Mr.  
and Mrs. A. P. Barrows'. A better  
time could not be had than those had  
who were present. The tree was very  
tastefully dressed and the gifts were rich  
and there were a large number of  
them. George A. Gardner, who is  
always ready for a good time, unex-  
pectedly got a claim, which caused  
great merriment. The exercises pre-  
vious to the distribution of presents  
consisted of the following, which were  
well rendered: reading of a poem by  
Lizzie Corlies, prose by Carrie Barney;  
recitation by Ella Corlies; singing of  
"When I can read my title clear," by  
all present. Among the presents were  
two good gold rings, overcoat, cardigan  
jackets, napkin rings, boots, car-  
pet and a lot of other things too  
numerous to mention.

Look out for the military ball.

The Laconia Car company have con-  
tracts for nearly 160 cars and are doing  
a thriving business. W. A. C.

**RUMNEY.**

The Christmas festivities at Jones' hall  
on Friday evening, and at the church on  
Saturday evening, were well appre-  
ciated by the goodly numbers in  
attendance.

Has our "Vigilance Committee" been  
informed of the rumor that there is a  
woman in our town who sells loose  
sables? In a business so infamous, no  
sex should be spared. We have no laws  
so rigorous for any person who, with  
a filthy lure's sake, will deal out liquid  
deaths by the glass.

Miss Frost, a young lady who has been  
living in the family of S. H. Quinby for  
some months past, who was stricken  
with paralysis several days ago, has so  
far recovered that she started for her  
home in Richmond, P. Q., on Monday.  
One arm however remains entirely help-  
less.

It has been ascertained by the "Appa-  
lachian Club" of Boston in their re-  
search, that the Indian name of our  
beautiful Baker's river is "Asquanchu-  
manne!"

O. C. Jones is one of our energetic  
men. He believes in work and finds  
it pays. In his large and convenient  
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